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PHYSICIST PLEADS GUILTY TO TRANSMITTING CLASSIFIED DEFENSE INFORMATION TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

United States Attorney Nora M. Manella announced that a physicist pleaded guilty today to transmitting classified national defense information to representatives of the People's Republic of China.

Dr. Peter H. Lee, 58, of Manhattan Beach, admitted that in 1985, while working as a research physicist at Los Alamos National Laboratory, he traveled to the People's Republic of China. At the time of his trip, Lee, an expert on laser energy, was working on classified projects relating to the simulation of nuclear detonations, which required that he have a security clearance. During meetings with Chinese scientists, Lee provided detailed information about the use of lasers to simulate nuclear detonations, even though Lee knew that this information was classified.

In pleading guilty, Lee admitted that he knew the information was classified, and that by transmitting the information he intended to help the Chinese.

"One of the nation's greatest resources is the knowledge possessed by our top scientists," Manella said. "The security of our nation depends on our scientists safeguarding that knowledge. Doctor Lee failed in his duty to protect the information entrusted to him."

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In addition to pleading guilty to transmitting national defense information, Lee admitted making a false statement to a government agency. The second charge related to conduct in 1997, when Lee again traveled to the People's Republic of China and lectured on various topics relating to his current employment as a research scientist for TRW, Inc. Following his return to the United States, Lee lied on a security form when he denied that he gave technical talks to the Chinese.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Jonathan S. Shapiro, the information Lee passed in 1985 had important military applications related to nuclear weapons. The information was later declassified.

Lee entered his guilty pleas before United States District Judge Terry J. Hatter, who scheduled a sentencing hearing for February 23, 1998. The defendant faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000. A plea agreement in this case has been filed under seal pursuant to an agreement of the parties.

This case is the result of an investigation conducted by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Foreign Counterintelligence Squad.

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